

CHESTERTON'S "MAGIC" TO MAKE FRIENDS FOR ENGLISH STAGE



MARION
DAVIES
IN
"OH! BOY"



MOLLY
MCINTYRE
"LOVE O' MIKE"



HAZEL
DAWN
IN
"THE
CENTURY
GIRL"

By LAWRENCE REAMER.

THE introduction of G. K. Chesterton's "Magic" at Maxine Elliott's Theatre on Monday will do much to counteract the bitter feeling of resentment which New York theatregoers had begun to feel toward the English stage. A single season that had brought forth "Caroline," "The Bunker," "The Lodger" and—well, it is just as well to name only the most worthy—might well have got on the somewhat too sensitive nerves of the practised theatregoer. But "Magic" is altogether a different product of the dramatist's skill. Nothing so fine in thought and so exquisite in workmanship has come out of the British theatre in years. Nor for that matter has any recent English play dealt with such exalted subjects as the aspiration of Mr. Chesterton.

Mr. Chesterton being by nature a believer has set out to show that his faith in miracles is not wholly personal. They do not exist as potential phenomena merely of his own life. They are easily perceptible by others once the mood of them is established. So the agnostic doctor and the broad-minded duke are made sensible of the presence of the spirits that have been summoned from somewhere if not like Manfred's from the vasty deep; and the high church clergyman, with his disposition to faith as strong at least as Mr. Chesterton's, believes readily in their presence.

What is perhaps more astonishing in this year of grace is the willingness of the spectators to accept the supernatural episodes of the play. Since Peter Grimm moved with such beauty through David Belasco's story of a returned spirit there have been no au-

pernatural characters to reckon with on the stage. But there may be others after the attitude of the public toward the manifestations in Mr. Chesterton's play is known. The Ghost in "Harnet" is as impressive as he ever was, and for that matter so are the kings and witches of "Macbeth." There was some little derision at the manifestation of the powers of evil in the last act. But undeniably a strong impression was made by the scene on the audience as a whole. There never yet was a playwright capable of putting on the stage a scene of any supernatural character so subtly made as to be proof against the snickering of some woman in the audience. But it is remarkable that even in the low level of intelligence represented by the average first night audience there was ample capacity to appreciate the beauty of the speech and symbolism of "Magic."

It is reported that Mr. Chesterton said it was the opinions of his play that were right and really mattered, whatever one might think of its form. It could of course be said that its form might have been greatly improved. In fact there is scarcely a rule of the mandarin which the three short acts do not break. But it does not seem to the writer true that the audience is constantly in doubt as to the happenings on the stage. Once there is an end to the hocus pocus and its discussion has been finished there is no possible dispute as to the nature of the conjurer's deed. He is calling on an unseen but pulsant force. It scarcely needs the explanation that he has leagued himself with the powers of darkness. The action seems plainly to prove that fact to discriminating minds capable of appreciating the

works of Chesterton in any medium. The tricks of the conjurer are shown to be the mere devices of the trade, while the manner in which he made the acquaintance of the sentimental young woman from Ireland is plainly described in the play. Indeed there could otherwise be no reason for her anger with him at having deceived her. So what there is in "Magic" to puzzle the listener with his ears open does not appear on the surface.

Of course there are mechanical means to increase the impressiveness of the invasion of the spirits from the lower world. Adroitly the lights are changed from yellow to a shade of white or green which throws every face into a ghastly pallor. In this way is the supernatural feeling maintained until the presumably thronging spirits have disappeared from the room and the air is again normal. Then the ghostly aspect disappears and the usual appearance of an English drawing room is restored.

It was interesting to see John Galsworthy restored to the stage in a less tragic mood than he was when last his work was seen in the theatre here. When Oliver Morosco comes to put "The Fugitive" before the New York public he will probably find that it is now difficult to interest the public in any serious play by the English author which has not the tragic force of "Justice." That dreary work was the last note in modern tragedy; no subsequent play from the same author will ever correspond to the public expectations of what the playwright can do.

It is interesting therefore to see a new phase of the dramatist's talent. As the simple hearted traveller who carries about with him the lost baby of an Austrian peasant and almost gets himself arrested as well as hated by the rest of the carload of passengers G. P. Heggie was amusing in his quiet way, although it is probably true that his participation in "Magic" was somewhat less impressive because he had been seen before in another play during the same evening. And in spite of the variations of his style Mr. Heggie is easily recognizable in all his incarnations. Any actor ought to be willing to stand or fall by Mr. Heggie's fine acting in "Magic."

Whatever the public attitude may be toward Mr. Chesterton's play, it is an inspiring and beautiful work, the genuine product of a literary man whose presence in the theatre is welcome. Of course it is damaged by the quality of tendency which is detrimental to any work of art. But its performance, whether the public supports it or not, is a notable contribution to the drama of the day.

BAYES, THE DISEASE.

The Same Nora Who Used to Want to Know About Kelly.

There was a time when it was easy to see Nora Bayes. All that was necessary was two bits and the inclination. You pushed the quarter in at the box office window and had the best seat in the house if you came early enough. That was back in the two-day period of her career.

But seeing her now is different since she has entered the two-a-week field. It takes two dollars at the box office of the Eltinge Theatre and two hours of spare time in order to take in her "two hours of song," as she calls her entertainment, and one does not feel at home in one of her modish Sunday evening concert audiences without the regular concert makeup. There was also a time when it was not difficult to interview Nora Bayes. When she was a vaudeville act it was "Come right in, boys. Have a seat over there on the trunk. Throw those doll bags on the floor. You don't mind if I go right ahead with making up,

do you? Now what do you want me to say? Anything you say, you know, goes with me."

Things have changed, however, since the days when she was pleased just to get her name in the papers. To interview the Bayes in "those days one must have a card. One of the "handwritten engraved" kind preferably. First the card is sent up to be certified and then endorsed before it is finally conveyed back stage by a liveried lackey to the temperamental "prima donna."

"What?" exclaims the modern Miss Bayes. "Another one of those horrid interviewing persons. Well, tell him he will have to wait."

While waiting one has a copy of a White Hat rag dated October, 1916, and the motion picture trade magazines for entertainment, and should these be exhausted there are chromos on the wall to study.

Even these will sometimes pull while Miss Bayes is changing from her stage harness into about \$7.50 worth of street clothes. If one has patience, however, the reward is adequate when she is ultimately waited into the room on the wings of a more or less delicate and appropriately Oriental perfume. She seats herself with composure and with a nod of the head indicates her willingness to be interviewed, but in the presence of so much magnificence the intellect is stupefied and one is rendered speechless with admiration.

She admits that she herself wrote

WHERE TO DANCE.

COCOANUT GROVE—Margaret Edwards, best known to New Yorkers as the girl who played the part of unclothed "Truth" in the motion picture "Hypocrites," will make her debut on the Century Roof Monday night in the Dance of Arabia and the Dance of the Blue Danube. She takes the place on the programme formerly occupied by Gertrude Hoffmann, whose contract expired last night.

FROLIC—The Ziegfeld Beauties on the overhead glass walk are the novel feature of the Mid-night Frolic, the brilliant after theatre review which includes such celebrities as the White-Rock combination, Bird Millman, Sybil Cermen, Adelaide Bell and other entertainers.

Bernhardt in Variety.

ACADEMY OF MUSIC, Brooklyn—Sarah Bernhardt will appear in repertoire with vaudeville. Thursday, matinee and night she will give "Madame X" and "Camille"; Friday, matinee and night "Hecube" and "Joan of Arc"; Saturday matinee, "Madame X" and "Camille"; Saturday night "Cleopatra" and "L'Aiglon." Vaudeville includes Claire Rochester, soprano-harmonica, Six Harvards, Saxophone Band, Lucille and Parrots; Donnelly, shadowgrapher; Harry Breen, humorist.

the unique programme one morning while sitting up in bed waiting for her maid to bring breakfast. She designed the cross stitch settings also and had Henry Ives Cobb execute her designs for her.

Nora Bayes really has a unique entertainment. Her two hours of song is a kind of continuous vaudeville performance consisting principally of course of Nora Bayes, with a few extra dancers flung in as fillers to hold the crowd while she is slipping out of one set of gaudies and into another. Nora Bayes's gowns are the stupefaction of Broadway. They have few of the attributes of the modest violet. They reach out and grab the attention like a passing fire engine or one of those protechnic display electric signs on Broadway after dark.

Her entertainment lies somewhere in between vaudeville and a costume recital. It is in fact not from a substantial vaudeville show.

She explains how she happened to take up the idea. She said that while

she was in vaudeville she had to be the whole show, while she was only getting paid for one act, so she decided that she would undertake a venture of her own. She says she has never had much luck with managers. They were all too temperamental. They soon came to the parting of the ways. "I have been trying all my life heretofore to give the public what it wants with only a moderate degree of success at pleasing. Now I am going to give the poor dear what I think is good for it, and if the public does not like my performance it can stay away," she says.

WHERE ARE THE GOOD ACTORS?

By HENRY MILLER.

It is a matter of common knowledge to every one interested in affairs theatrical that producing managers have been seriously crippled this year and for several years past by the scarcity of actors. In the past half dozen years scores of New York productions have been postponed indefinitely because the managers interested simply could not fill the casts with capable players. One can only guess the number of productions that have unquestionably owed their failure to the fact that the actors assigned to the most important roles bungled the characterizations entrusted to them.

This situation is the more noteworthy in view of the fact that year after year there are fewer attractions on tour and thus more and more actors who ordinarily would be "at liberty."

The prime explanation is to be found in "the movies," which have had to bear all manner of blame at the hands of the spoken drama insofar as diminished box office receipts are concerned, but which have escaped generally the charge I consider they should stand indicted for at the same time lowering the standard of acting and robbing the theatre of capable players.

Of course there are many other reasons for the existing actor famine. Death has robbed my own productions of many players in the past half dozen years, players whose places it is almost impossible to fill in one season shortly after the moving picture business began to offer fabulous salaries I was obliged to abandon "The Family" when Henry V. Donnelly died on the eve of the New York opening, and when Clay Clement died after one day's illness and two weeks later in the same company that was then playing "The Servant in the House" Creston Clarke also died unexpectedly—I had to close the company and cancel all subsequent bookings. It was literally impossible to find competent successors. Other managers have had similar experiences in this period of motion picture madness.

But none of the reasons that may be advanced for the scarcity of actors can save us from the grim conclusion that a remarkable dearth of talent exists to-day on the American stage. And curiously enough the filling of casts almost invariably falls at a male role, and particularly when the character calls for a young man.

There is no lack of leading women or feminine stars. There are always good actresses in the American theatre. It is also true that one can find almost always a broad comedian or a star who requires a play to "fit his personality." But when a producer requires a young man with only moderate ability as an actor but who can look and talk like a gentleman and wear well fitting clothes without looking like a fish out of water the full extent of the actor famine is realized. If some one manager should "corner" ten young American actors of the type

I have in mind the situation would become almost hopeless.

Any dramatic critic or other regular frequenter of the theatres will realize the extent of this young male actor famine by recalling the season's casts. One production made this week was delayed more than two months because the producer sought in vain for just one young man capable of playing a part of hardly more than minor importance. Whenever in the course of assembling a cast for a new play I "withdraw from circulation" one or two exceptionally talented young actors I immediately become recipient of dozens of appeals from other managers to release one or both of them for productions that simply cannot go on without them.

Especially heartrending is the experience of the manager who tries to produce a purely American play, requiring absolutely American actors. There are many talented players who have come to us from England—those who are still here are physically incapacitated in one way or another from army service, you may be sure—but their unmistakable English accent would mar the realism of any American play. Habitual theatregoers will surely recall several recent productions in which actors were cast who were of our native soil but whose lines with a strong Anglican accent and introduced London manners into their stage "business." One instance I recall was so blatantly a case of an Englishman playing an American as to necessitate rewriting the play in part to show that the young gentleman had just returned from an English college which he "preferred to Yale." That, of course, explained away the accent!

Current Productions.

Astor, "Her Soldier Boy"; Bantbox, "The Lodger"; Belasco, "The Little Lady in Blue"; Booth, "A Successful Calamity"; Brannhall, "Keeping Up Appearances"; Casino, "You're In Love"; Century, "The Century Girl"; Cohan, "Come Out of the Kitchen"; Cohan & Harris, "Captain Kidd, Jr."; Comedy, "The Washington Square Players"; Cort, "Winters and Down"; Creston, "Johnny Get Your Gun"; Eltinge, "Cheating Cheaters"; Eltinge, Nora Bayes's matinee; Empire, "A Kiss for Cinderella"; Forty-eighth Street, "The 13th Chair"; Fulton, "Ception Shoals"; Gale, "Turn to the Right"; Garrick, Theatre Francaise, "Globe"; "The Harp of Life"; Harris, "The Yellow Jacket"; and "The Imaginary Invalid"; Hippodrome, "The Big Show"; Hudson, "Shirley Kaye"; Irving Place, German repertory; Knickerbocker, "The Music Master"; Liberty, "Have a Heart"; Longacre, "Nothing But the Truth"; Lyceum, "The Great Divide"; Manhattan Opera House, "The Wanderer"; Morosco, "Canary Cottage"; Maxine Elliott's, "Magic" and "The Little Man"; New Amsterdam, "Miss Springtime"; Playhouse, "The Man Who Came Back"; Princess, "Oh Boy"; Republic, "Lilac Time"; Shubert, "Love o' Mike"; Thirty-ninth Street, "Old Lady 31"; Winter Garden, "Show of Wonders."

Motion Pictures—Broadway, "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea"; Lyric, "The Honor System"; Forty-fourth Street, Geraldine Farrar in "Joan the Woman"; Park, "Enlighten Thy Daughter."

IN THE THEATRES THIS WEEK.

PRINCESS—F. Ray Comstock will present on Tuesday "Oh, Boy," a musical play in which such experts as Guy Bolton, Jerome Kerns and P. G. Wodehouse. These three conspirators have been successful in the past, and here's hoping for a successor to "Very Good Eddie," in which they were more or less actively concerned. In the company are such noted stage beauties as Marion Davies and Justine Johnson, while Tom Powers, Marie Cahill, Anna Wheaton, Hal Forde, Frank McGinn and Edna Oliver will be there for the real work.

STANDARD—Chauncey Olcott cannot get away from the public, in which the public loves him, try as he may. So "The Heart of Paddy Whack" will bring this popular actor back this week.

BRONX OPERA HOUSE—"Polyanna," with its regular cast, will be the attraction this week.

GARRICK—The Theatre Francaise will present "Le Bonheur, Mesdames," a comedy in four acts by Francis de Croisset. The play, presented at the Theatre des Varieties, Paris, ten years ago, was one of the successes of the year. Yvonne Garriel will have the leading role and will be associated with Yvonne Mirval, Jenny Diska, Jane Demons, Robert Tournier, Georges Renavent, Georges Saulieu, Pierre Mindaist, Andre Bellon, Edmond Pelletier and Bernard Rosset.

IRVING PLACE—Leo Ascher's operetta "Hoheit Tanzt Walzer," which is repeating its success of last season, will be the bill for Monday, Tuesday and Thursday (Washington's Birthday) evenings. The audiences enjoy the novelty of seeing the leading members of the company filling the ranks of the chorus with several changes of dress, and the members of the company seem to be enjoying it as well.

This week's novelty at the Irving Place Theatre will be a production of Hermann Bahr's comedy "Das Konzert" (The Concert), which will be given on Wednesday evening and repeated as special matinee for Thursday, and on Friday and Saturday evenings and Saturday matinee. Dir. Rudolf Christians will play the leading part of Gustav Heink.

LEXINGTON THEATRE—A new play entitled "Which One Shall I Marry?" will be presented. The play has a serious question of love and marriage for its central theme, but has comedy to carry it through to a laughing success.



Beatrice Wood
(Mlle. Patricia)
Theatre Francaise